



HELPING NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS FIND WORK AND STAY EMPLOYED

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (OAG) works to ensure that Texas parents provide their children with the resources they need to lead happy, healthy lives. To help make this happen, the OAG partnered with the Texas Workforce Commission on a program designed to empower parents with jobs and the ability to provide much-needed support for their children.

The Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Choices program aims to increase child support collections and family economic stability by requiring participation in employment and training services through a court order for parents who have unpaid child support. The program, which was initiated in 2005, now operates in 17 workforce board areas that serve parents from 44 child support offices.

NCP Choices is a multi-site child support enforcement and employment program that links strong court-ordered compliance monitoring to assistance with job search efforts, backed by swift and certain sanctions for those who fail to comply with program requirements. By leveraging the resources of the OAG, TWC and Title IV-D child

support associate judges, the program has proven to be cost effective for parents who have fallen behind on their child support. More than \$3 in child support is collected for every \$1 spent on the program.

The impact on families receiving child support, especially families living at the lower end of the economic spectrum, is great. Families who receive child support are less likely to rely on TANF, working parents are less likely to file unemployment claims and their children are more likely to be covered by medical insurance.

The program has put more child support in the hands of families who need it most. Since 2005, more than 7,500 parents — who were neither working nor paying child support when ordered into the program — have paid more than \$25 million in support to their children. Factors important to the program's success include requiring participation as part of court orders, having concrete choices, providing enhanced child support monitoring, providing immediate Workforce intervention at court and imposing clear consequences for non-compliance.

The OAG's partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission helps provide parents with the tools they need to get and keep a job. In addition to increasing child support collections and reducing the need for public assistance, the program also helps parents regain confidence in taking care of their families. Everyone — including the taxpayer — benefits when parents take financial responsibility for their kids.

Evaluation of the program by the University of Texas found it to be one of the most successful large-scale NCP employment efforts in the nation to date.

In 2007, the OAG and the Texas Workforce Commission received the Commissioner's Award for Innovative Partnership from the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Child Support Enforcement for NCP Choices.

The OAG strives to continue developing innovative solutions to help Texas families. For more information on this project and others, visit the Attorney General's website, www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.

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POINTS TO REMEMBER



NCP CHOICES

Factors important to the project's success include:

- Requiring participation as part of court orders
- Providing enhanced child support monitoring
- Having concrete choices
- Providing immediate Workforce intervention at court
- Imposing clear consequences for non-compliance

For more information about family initiatives projects call (512) 460-6400.

To apply for child support services call (800) 252-8014 or visit the Attorney General's website, www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.



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